



Dell says environmental goals ahead of schedule

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DALLAS (AP) - Dell Inc. Chief Executive Officer Michael Dell again urged other computer manufacturers to offer free recycling to consumers on Thursday, saying that protecting the environment is "too important an issue for one company to be leading alone."

The comments were made as part of an annual "Sustainability Report," which Dell has been publishing since 1998. In the new report, Dell said it was ahead of schedule in its goal of recycling 275 million pounds of computer equipment by 2009, though it didn't say when it would be reached.

The company cited a new IDC survey of 1,000 companies commissioned by Dell that found only about a third of them used so-called "asset recovery" services to recycle their electronics.

"Protecting the environment is too important an issue for one company to be leading alone," Michael Dell said in a statement. "Customers should not be forced into improper disposal due to a lack of environmentally responsible options. To that end, we are renewing our challenge to every computer manufacturer, regardless of size or location, to join us in offering a free, global consumer recycling program."

Industrywide, companies have begun adopting more affordable recycling practices to prevent cadmium, mercury and lead and other hazardous materials contained in many electronics from ending up in landfills as "e-waste."

Dell and Hewlett-Packard Co. both have programs where customers can have their old computers and other electronic gadgets recycled for free or a small shipping charge.

Dell recovered more than 78 million pounds of unwanted computer gear last year, a 93 percent increase over 2005, according its report.

HP boasted last week that it had recycled a half billion pounds of electronics since 2004, six months ahead of schedule, and was on track to recycle another billion pounds by the end of 2010.

And Apple Inc. has said it plans to completely eliminate the use of arsenic in all of its displays by the end of 2008, and the company will eventually stop using mercury and will transition to LED backlighting whenever possible.

There's another reason Dell has been an industry leader in the environment, said Zach Trahan, program assistant for the Texas Campaign for the Environment.

"It helps to sell their products, but also they are looking to the future when there are more, stricter laws," he said. "They want to be ahead of that curve."

Dell's promotion of green policies has grown even as the Round Rock, Texas, company struggles against rivals.

In a strategic shift from its direct-sales model, the company recently began selling PCs at Wal-Mart stores and has refreshed its consumer notebook computers in a rainbow of colors and rolled out a new product line aimed at small businesses.

It hasn't helped yet: two research companies reported Wednesday that HP had extended its market share

lead over Dell in the second quarter.

IDC put HP's worldwide market share at 19.3 percent, while Gartner had it at 18.2 percent. The firms put Dell at 15 percent and 16.1 percent, respectively. Dell remains the largest maker of PCs for the U.S. market, with a 28.4-29.9 percent market share, but the number of units sold declined 11 percent, while HP's rose 26 percent.

Dell also remains under a federal investigation over unspecified accounting issues and hasn't filed a report with the Securities and Exchange Commission since last year. Shares continue to trade on the Nasdaq Stock Market pending another review, even though it has been unable to meet listing requirements due to its inability to file the reports.

The company has offered no timetable on a resolution.

Dell shares were up 18 cents to \$29.17 in Thursday afternoon trading. Shares have ranged from \$18.95 to \$29.61 in the past year.

7

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